

**Message #28****I Corinthians 7:12-24**

Christianity is designed to affect all areas of life. It is designed to affect one's relationship with God. It is designed to affect one's relationship with sin. It is designed to affect one's relationship with the world. It is designed to change one's relationship with the Church. It is designed to change one's relationship on the job. It is designed to affect one's relationship in the home. A relationship with Jesus Christ is to be life-changing.

Now another question arises; what if you have a situation where one partner is a believer and the other isn't. Should the believer divorce the unbeliever or stay married to the unbeliever?

**GOD'S IDEAL IS THAT A BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN THE SAME MARITAL STATUS THAT EXISTED WHEN GOD TRANSFORMED THE BELIEVER'S LIFE.**

Whatever relationship you were in when God did His greatest work in your life is the one the believer should do his/her best to maintain.

When Paul begins **verse 12** by saying, "But to the rest I say, not the Lord," he is not talking about inspiration but about revelation. In other words, Paul is now going to reveal new information which had not been previously revealed by our Lord.

The following subjects are new Church Age truth specifically written by Paul.

**TOPIC #1** – God's ideal is that a Christian spouse not divorce the non-Christian spouse.  
**7:12-16**

Paul was very much aware of a principle that Christ Himself taught, namely, sometimes a commitment to Jesus Christ may split a family (Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 12:51-53; 14:26). A commitment to Jesus Christ may possibly at times cost one his/her marriage.

However, Paul wanted to stress that it was important for the believer to do everything possible to maintain the marriage relationship. So if the unbelieving mate "consents" to stay in the marriage, the marriage should be maintained. That word "consent" which shows up in **verses 12 and 13** is a word that means to approve, to agree to, to consent. The idea is if the unbelieving mate agrees to stay in the relationship, then the believer should do everything possible to maintain it.

Now the conditional element involved in determining whether or not the marriage should be maintained is whether or not the unbeliever agrees to stay in the marriage with the changed believer. Paul DID NOT believe or teach that the marriage should be maintained at any cost.

**Reason #1** - The sanctification reason. **7:14**

That word “sanctify” is one that means to be consecrated, to be separated, to be holy in the sense of being pure.

It is of great benefit for the unbeliever to be married to the believer. When there is a believer in the home, God consecrates the home to Himself, which means that those in it stand to become the recipients of His special blessings and protection. That principle is whenever you have one in a close relationship with God present, the rest of the society benefits from their presence.

This was true in the case of Noah—God blessed Noah’s family. Gen. 6:9, 18

This was true in the case of Jacob—God blessed Laban. Gen. 30:27

This was true in the case of Joseph—God blessed Potipher. Gen. 39:5

The principle is that when there is one walking close with God in the society, the entire society benefits because God will bless the one faithful to Him and those connected to that one share in the blessings.

**Reason #2** - The salvation reason. **7:16**

Another reason for the believer to try and stay in a marriage with an unbeliever is because we do not know whether or not God will use the believing mate as an instrument to influence the unbelieving mate to come to salvation. A married believer should always remember that God may save the lost mate.

Paul was a realist and he knew there would be situations and times when the unbeliever would get fed up with the believer.

Paul says in **verse 15** if that happens, the believer is free to let the unbeliever go and is free to remarry, but only in the Lord (7:39).

**TOPIC #2** – God’s ideal is that a Christian remain in the same marital status as when God worked in the life. **7:17-24**

Three verses in this section, **7:17, 20** and **24** clearly reiterate the thought that God wants the person to remain in the marital state in which God dramatically worked in the life.

**Illustration #1** - The illustration of circumcision. **7:18-20**

Believers should stay in their present relationship, in which they are physically and presently in. The illustration of circumcision refers to the physical side of marriage.

Paul's counsel is that we believers should stay in our present marital relationship and focus on obeying God (7:19-20).

**Illustration #2** - The illustration of slavery. 7:21-24

One who is bound in marriage should stay in the marriage. One who is free should stay free.

Marriage is to be a picture of one's relationship to Jesus Christ.

- 1) Do you love Him? What is your first love?
- 2) Are you serving Him? What is it that you serve?
- 3) Are you bound to Him? What are you a slave to?